



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
Public Information Office
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688
www.courtinfo.ca.gov

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton
Public Information Officer

NEWS RELEASE

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California Chief Justice to Swear in Jury to Honor Role of Jurors in Democracy

Trial Courts Celebrate Juror Appreciation Week in Various Ways throughout California

San Francisco—Chief Justice Ronald M. George will swear in a civil jury in the Superior Court of San Francisco County at 2 p.m. today to mark the start of the May 9–13 Juror Appreciation Week—a time set aside by the California Legislature to honor the important role of jurors in the democratic system of government.

Chief Justice George—the state’s top jurist—will re-administer the oath to 12 jurors and 4 alternates in a six-week civil asbestos trial now being heard before Judge Mary E. Wiss in the superior court, Courtroom 504, 400 McAllister Street, San Francisco. (*Pierce v. Certaineed Corporation*, No. 408642.)

“Jurors are the foundation of our legal system,” Chief Justice George said. “The success of our judicial system depends on the participation of all citizens who are called to serve. We are honoring not just the jurors serving this week, but those in all state courts—past and future—who contribute to democracy by participating in their civic duty of serving on the jury.”

More than two million Californians participate in jury service each year, with one million reporting for duty in person and another million reporting in by telephone. In San Francisco, more than 87 percent of citizens summoned for duty participate in jury service each year.

During the swearing in, Chief Justice George will remind jurors of their important role and will note many reforms made in California in the past several years to make jury duty a pleasant and rewarding experience. Those reforms include:

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July 2000: First increase in juror pay since 1957, from \$5 to \$15 a day, starting with the second day of service.

May 2000: Creation of a Juror Web site that answers frequently asked questions about jury service at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jury .

May 2002: Distribution of the first statewide juror video, *Ideals Made Real*, to all California trial courts. Videos were accompanied by a new brochure on jury service.

June 2002: Statewide implementation of the one-day-or-one-trial jury system.

May 2003: Launch of the Administrative Office of the Courts' Employer Jury Service Education Campaign, which encouraged California businesses to pay employees while they serve on jury duty.

September 2003: Adoption of "plain English" civil jury instructions used by judges throughout California.

2003-2005: Development of a "model jury summons" that is understandable and has consumer appeal. The model summons is now being pilot tested by courts statewide.

August 2005: "Plain English" criminal jury instructions will be submitted to the Judicial Council for review.

Created by legislative resolution in 1998, Juror Appreciation Week honors jurors for their role. In the Superior Court of San Francisco County, reporting jurors will be greeted with a welcome banner and refreshments, along with a goodie bag that includes a letter of appreciation from the presiding judge and jury commissioner, a pen, a wrist band, a superior court gavel pencil and fortune cookies. A resolution from the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors will be on display.

Courts across the state will treat jurors to breakfast, snacks, and give-aways while promoting juror efforts with the local media. Orange County jurors will be treated to music presented by school children, while San Diego jurors will attend a lunchtime concert.

In honor of the week, the Administrative Office of the Courts mailed materials to all trial courts in California, including a wrist band that says, "We the People: The American Jury in Action." This is the theme of Law Day USA, celebrated nationwide by the American Bar Association on May 1, 2005, in honor of juries.

Editor's Note: The Chief Justice will be available for press questions following today's ceremony in the superior court's Multi-Purpose Room, Room 509, 400 McAllister Street. Mr. Gordon Park-Li, the court's Executive Officer, will also be present.

For more information, call Abbi Hertz at 415-543-3216 or Lynn Holton at 415-865-7726.

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